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THE
CHARACTER
OF AN
Honest DISSENTER,
IN
Twelve Marks:
Together with
An Illustration of Each.

By RICH. PEERS Vicar of FARINGDON Berks.

THE THIRD EDITION.

To which is prefix'd
AN
ADDITIONAL PREFACE

In Answer to a Letter occasion'd by the two former Editions, and pretended to be wrote by a CLERGY-MAN; and

A Letter from a LAY-MAN to the Author.

Prov. 26. 26. *Whose Hatred is covered by Deceit, His Wickedness shall be shew'd before the whole Congregation.*

O X F O R D,

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The Preface may be had single by any Person who had the Character before.

Imprimatur,

J O. B A R O N

VICE-CAN. OXON.

Jan. 23. 1716.





A

NEW PREFACE
TO THE
CHARACTER
OF AN
Honest DISSENTER,
IN

Answer to a Letter occasion'd by *IT*,
AND
Pretended to be Wrote by a *Clergy-man.*

By RICHARD PEERS Author of the Character, &c.

Prov. 26. 26. *Whose Hatred is covered by Deceit, His Wickedness shall be shewed before the whole Congregation.*

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...and the Lord said unto me, "Go forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

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A N
Additional Preface, &c.

THOU the main Substance of this Character is as little affected by the Letter which pretends to answer it, as Myself by the Personal Reflections It abounds with: Yet since 'tis probable, This Performance may meet with the usual Success of Things of this Kind, so as to be read and judg'd of with Partiality by Those, whose Cause it undertakes to defend, 'tis proper some notice should be taken of It.

If the Author be a Clergyman, and had thought fit to satisfy the World, that he is so, by publishing his Name, I should have hoped to see a proper Exercise of Episcopal Power upon Him, who has so falsely charg'd Me with destroying it; For 'tis but too evident, his design is not against Me only, but all the Clergy of the Church of England, especially those, who have engag'd our Adversaries in open Controversy; But I thank Him for taking off the Mask so soon, which He blames in Me; He declares Himself a Brother in the Title Page, and a false One in the very first Paragraph, and thus prevents the Success of his own Artifice, so that the most ignorant of his Party will not conceive the better Opinion of his Letter, nor the worse of the Character, through a No-

A t i o n

tion of one Clergy-man's correcting the Errors of Another.

P. 3. Had He been a Brother, I could not have taken Him into my Counsels for Want of knowing him; But had He acted like one, he would have pursu'd the Method he proposes, and have communicated his Thoughts to me in Manuscript, before he had made his Appeal to the World; And yet I cannot return his Compliment, that I should have been better pleas'd with them so, than in Print. For I must confess, His first Paragraph labours with such a Jumble of Inconsistencies, as makes it a proper Introduction to the rest of his Letter.

P. 3. He would have our Young Divines, and most of the Zealous Church-Men amongst Us, who want all kind of Helps for this Purpose, engage the Sectaries in ordinary Conversation with a shew of Argument, and therefore I might have communicated my Paper to my Neighbours upon exigence; What? to my Neighbours only, when most of the Zealous Church-Men want all Kind of Helps? And is the ordinary Conversation of the Sectaries such a mighty Exigence, when a shew of Argument is sufficient to engage them? I must own, the Neighbours, I shou.. have thus assisted, would have been just as much oblig'd to Me, as the Sectaries are to my good Brother, who thinks a shew of Argument would do our Cause Service That being enough to engage Them with in ordinary Conversation.

Tis not my design to pursue this nameless Adversary of the Church, and myself, so as to take Him at every Trip, much less shall I fling him back again his own contemptuous and reproachful Language;

These

These Methods of managing Controversy I leave to those, who delight in them, and those who need them. He, I thank him, has not put Me to these Shifts, but has so stuffed his Letter with gross Inconsistencies, false as well as foul Conclusions, and uncharitable Censures, that whether the Church ought most to be ashamed of its pretended, or the Dissenters of their real Advocate, is not easy to determine.

In the first Place He charges me with ill Treatment of the Dissenters, for a Performance, which gives them mighty satisfaction, and over which they triumph exceedingly. However, my Design was against them, he will say, tho' my own Weakness is discover'd; But how does This appear? I might prevaricate, as He has done, and then surely I could be guilty of no ill Treatment towards the Dissenters; But, I hope, their so much boasted of Charity will help me out here, so as that they will believe I design'd their Good, and therefore excuse my Weakness, especially, if, as He intimates, It turns so much to their Advantage.

If I have given the Character of a Person not in Being, of One at least, I have never met with, or, as He will have it, of One, which probably never will be shewn in Life, I can't think Myself concern'd in the Consequence, He would draw from Hence, any more, than He would be, if he should describe an Honest Man in general to be one, who keeps his Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man, and I should smartly infer, that such an one is no where to be found. For the Question is not, whether Men are in all Respects as Honest, as they should be, but whether a Clergy-Man may not set the very ut-

most Extent of their Duty before them; so that, tho' what I have said of the Honest Dissenter be applicable to any other Honest Man, viz. that He desires to maintain Unity &c. yet if Education, Example, and in some Cases perhaps Interest may be apt to sway the Dissenter, to make him less desirous of Unity &c. then I have not multiply'd Words to no Manner of Purpose.

Nay at his Rate of Talking, what an Arrant, prating Trifler must the Apostle be, who prescribes

2 Tim. 3. 3. the very same Restrictions to a Bishop, that a Presbyter or Deacon, nay that even a Lay-man ought to conform to?

Well! But I have been careless of my own and the Church's Interest, in giving the Dissenters a cold and lifeless Exhortation to pay their Tythes. Have I so? And should I not have multiply'd words to no manner of Purpose, had I labour'd to persuade them to pay their Tythes, who, as he affirms, are generally very civil and liberal to Us of the Clergy, in not only paying Us beyond our Due, but helping us upon extraordinary Occasions? But I am apt to think, that if He finds them no more liberal to him, than many Others of the Clergy, he will not hereafter be so forward to plead their Cause.

However, I am very well pleas'd with his publishing to the World the Assistance I receiv'd from Three or Four Occasional Conformists in Building the Vicarage House at Faringdon, because it gives me an opportunity of publickly returning my Thanks to Them, and many Others, both Clergy and Laity, who help'd to ease me in so large an Expence, there being not so much as Ground

to build on ; so that otherwise this Pious Work must have been wholly neglected, neither the Vicarage, nor my private Fortune being sufficient for It.

Tho' , when I acknowledge my own and the Church's Benefactors, I must do Justice to Myself, being with Respect to the House, become a Purchaser for Life. And This I pretty well foresaw at first, so that the Principle of self-Interest was not quite so commanding in Me, as I find 'tis in my good Brother, who seems ready to become Patron or Advocate of any Cause for an Estate, Preferment, or perhaps only Contributions.

*But from the Proofs of the Dissenters Liberality come we next to those of their sincerity, and as an Instance, in which they mightily glory, to their Sufferings all along and from which if p. 9.
You will believe Him, They are not at present free. i. e. I suppose Their Ministry are unmercifully excluded from the Preferments of the Church, and their Laity from Those of the State, upon somewhat more than a Suspicion, that They want only Power to destroy them Both.*

And here the Bartholomew-Act is trumped up again with a Face of Brass, and branded with Persecution, for obliging Men to be Honest against their Will, and fling up those Preferments, which were none of their own. Whilst the sufferings the Church endur'd for near 20 years before, from Men void of Humanity as well as Religion, are purposely forgot. This, if I mistake not, is an eminent Instance of the Sincerity of our Clergy, in which we deservedly glory, and as great a Proof of the Contrary in the Nonconformists, who are always upbraiding us with the number of their pretended

tended Sufferers, without taking any Notice of the much greater Number of our real ones.

But had this Authour the least Tincture of Charity, He would have spar'd those vile Aspersions, he so plentifully casts upon the Clergy in general, and those to my own Knowledge unjust Ones, which he has but the Pretence of Hear-say for charging this Neighbourhood with in Particular ; But he is willing, it seems, to let us know, that He and his Party have no other Meaning, by Charity, Sincerity, Moderation, and such like good Words, than only to impose upon the Ignorant, and make them believe, Nobody has any of These, but Those, who have them always in their Mouths.

Let us see then how this mighty Apologist for the Dissenters sets them on the higher Ground for their Charity, the pretended Shibboleth of the Party. And of This, in Imitation of their Favourite Piece The Rights of Protestant Dissenters, He makes their Occasional Conformity to be the Test. What? does Charity oblige them to comply with an Unscriptural Worship, and with an Usurpation of our Saviour's Right to impose Terms of Communion? Methinks if they will do so much for Charity, Peace and Unity might demand the Rest of them ; and if they will sometimes sacrifice their Objections against the Church to the Former, they might always do it for the sake of the Latter.

But should they not sometimes conform to the Church, they would be guilty of Schism for want of Charity ; Those then of the Dissenters, who do not conform Occasionally, are guilty of Schism ; and what They are guilty of, who hold

*Communion with open and avow'd Schismaticks,
I need not determine.*

But why should Schism separate Men, when according to our Authour, even Heresy in a Congregation, tho' such Heresy makes them separate from Others, will not warrant Others in withdrawing from such Heretical Congregations. For what has ordinary Worship to do with speculative Opinions? Tho' with Respect to each other, Presbyterians and Anabaptists be Hereticks, yet this Gentleman thinks, They ought sometimes to worship together, and now and then go to Church too, lest they should renounce the Society of Christians. must we then bear our publick Testimony only against the Orders of our Governours, and that in Matters Indifferent, but not against Tenets, which shake the Foundation of our common Christianity? This, I presume, is a Doctrine founded upon the charitable Scheme of the Free-thinkers; and it must then be a Sign of Persecution, if according to the Apostolical Canon the Church should at any Time reject a Man that is an Heretick, since we are bound in Charity to join either in Communion or Ordinary Worship with an Heretical Congregation.

Besides These already mention'd, there are a few Canting Words more, which I would fain know the Meaning of, such as Unscriptural, Imposition &c. If Unscriptural means any Thing, it must be that which is contrary to Scripture, or which is not at all determin'd by It. As to the Modes and Circumstances of Church-Worship or Communion, the First is not pretended, and as for the Latter, I defy the most Scriptural Differ-

ter of them all, to produce Authority of Scripture for every Rule of their Directory, or even for the Modes and Circumstances of the Worship and Communion, which They have amongst them.

*And now was it not mighty kind in my loving
P. 4. Brother to advise Me, and the Rest of the Church-
Men to lay aside all other Arguments, and insist
upon the Authority of the Church only? What?
Have we not shew of Argument enough, but
we must urge that Authority to our Adversaries,
against which they already bear their publick
Testimony, as an Unscriptural Usurpation
and Imposition? No; instead of the Church's
Authority, for once I will make Use of their
Own, Does not their Teacher put on a Band, or a
Cloak without consulting the Congregation? And
are They not thereby impos'd upon, since This
is done without either their Consent, or the Autho-
rity of Scripture? Nay I am apt to think, the
Time and Place of Worship, and the stated Re-
turns of Communion will scarcely be found in
Scripture. If the Place of their Meeting had been
determin'd by the Canons of the Church, as 'tis
by Act of Parliament, to be such only, as is Li-
cens'd by the Bishop, I doubt not, we should have
seen their publick Testimony against This also.
However Modes and Circumstances of Worship
there must be, and such as are Unscriptural too,
i. e such as are not appointed in Scripture; and
as to the distinction of the natural and moral Ne-
cessity of these Things, I refer to the London
Cases, it being too large to be here inserted.*

*But how comes Their Teacher to have the com-
mand of their Time, and this to be longer or shorter
at*

at his Discretion? What? will He pretend to impose upon them after the Hour-Glass is out? And do they not think fit to bear their publick Testimony against his private Authority, leave him in the Midst of his Prayer or Sermon, and break loose from an Unscriptural Confinement? But in Pity to him let us allow him a Liberty of imposing upon them more ways than One, or I am afraid he will lose much the greater Part of his Congregation.

And now having examin'd the Dissenters Liberality, Sincerity, Charity, &c. as set off with the Advantage of Words by their Advocate, I shall give a Specimen or two of his admirable Talent at Reasoning, and Perverting the Sense of his Author. He would make Me insinuate, That P. 14.
the Necessity of the Episcopal Order is not to be prov'd without the Testimony of Antiquity, whereas 'tis plain from P. 11. of the Honest Dissenter, I can mean only this, that no Honest Man can separate from an Episcopal Church, merely upon Account of it's being So, till he has fully consider'd and understood those Passages of Scripture, and those Testimonies of Antiquity, the former of which establish, and the latter clear up the Institution of that Order. For tho' by Appealing in this Case to the Apostolick Fathers, as the most proper Witnesses of what was in Fact the Government of the Church in their Age, we do not weaken the Authority of Scripture; Yet since the Sense of those Passages of Scripture, which establish the Necessity of Episcopacy, is disputed, who, I pray, are so proper Judges in this Controversy, as They, who immediately succeeded the Apostles,

or at most were but a few Removes from them ?

Next to the divine Authority of Scripture we appeal to the consentient Testimonies of the purest Antiquity, and the Practice of the Church in it's first and uncorrupted Ages. And here for once I will try, whether the Authority of our Church, which our Authour kindly advises Me to insist on, is of Weight with Him. In the Preface to the Forms of Ordination She has thus determin'd. It is evident unto all Men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authours, that from the Apostles Time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

But it seems, the Testimony of Antiquity is what this Gentleman and his Party are afraid of; well knowing that all the Novel Schemes, and loose Opinions, which abound among Us, and have made such deplorable Breaches in the Unity of the Church, must fall before It. So that Here again we have the Happiness to see him unmask'd, or to look through his Disguise, and perceive him to be a false Accuser of the Brethren.

The same Kind of wretched Reasoning is continu'd in Answer, as our Authour supposes, to this
 p. 10. &c. Assertion of mine, that the Parochial Minister is the Guide and Director of the Souls committed to his Charge; and therefore an Honest Man will communicate his Scruples to Him, before he separates. And why not? Have not the Laws of Men, (tho' as he will have it, the Laws of God
 p. 16. had Nothing to do in the Case) set the Clergy to watch over the Souls of the People, and that for this very Reason, because so much at least the Laws
 of

of God direct, that Men should obey those, that have the Rule over them and esteem them highly in Love for their Work's sake? *Hath not Christ given his Church Pastors and Teachers for the perfecting of the Saints?* ^{Eph. 4. 11.} *And why may not a due Attention, and an honest Disposition render their Advice, as well as the Precepts of the Gospel clear and effectual?* These are as general Expressions, I am sure, as any He advises us to insist on; and why should not the People be guided by Them, (if Sufficiently qualify'd as I suppose, and not under strong Temptations to mislead them,) except it be to shew their Humour of opposing their Governours in the Church, as, when displeas'd These Men always do those in the State?

O! But my Readers, or this Answerer for them will cry out Popery upon Me, (*a very serviceable Word, I confess;*) But why so? Because such a Claim to the Direction of Men's Consciences savours of Infallibility; i. e. There is no Qualification for a Man to be a proper Director of Another's Conscience, but Infallibility; A divine Commission, a Course of Studies, and (to be suppos'd) Integrity are nothing to this Purpose. But for once to put him out of his Play, let us bring this mighty Argument of his to Method, if such incoherent Stuff can be made Methodical.

Every Man, who claims the Direction of other Men's Consciences, makes Himself Infallible; But

The Parochial Ministers of the Church of England claim the Direction of other Men's viz. their Parishioner's Consciences; Therefore

The Parochial Ministers of the Church of England make Themselves Infallible.

The Major I deny, and defy Him, and all his Club to prove it. But for his Use I will present him with one Syllogism more, if he knows what That means, which he may apply, as he sees Occasion.

Every Man, who thinks he has no Need of the Direction of Others, makes Himself Infallible; But

He, who refuses their Direction, who are appointed to give it him, thinks he has no Need of the Direction of Others; Therefore

He, who refuses their Direction, who are appointed to give it him, makes Himself Infallible.

But tho' our Authour is so grossly out in his Reasoning, and cares not, tho' he be so, the whole Letter being design'd only to amuse, yet his other End may happen to be serv'd by it, viz. to carry on the grand Design of the Party against the Church, by traducing it's Ministers as Favou-rers of Popery. You have therefore that servi-ceable Word in different Characters, and some O-thers before it in Capital Letters, to strike the Eye of Those, who can only read, and to insinuate, that every Parish Minister, who claims, as he ought, the Direction of his Parishioners in their Spir-itual Concerns, sets up for a Pope, and is ready to act the Tyrant over their Consciences with a Ven-geance.

And now, after this bold Stroke at all the Cler-gy of the Church, who would think He should be so

much offended at my Parochial Scheme, as he calls it, only because it destroys Episcopal Jurisdiction? so then; From Popery I have took a swinging Leap, it seems, into Presbytery. But here his Reasoning is so perplex'd, that 'tis hard to make even common Sense of it, and that, to use his own false English, can be neither Gentleman, nor Clergyman Dealing.

P. 19.

P. 7.

But to the Point; The Bishop, we allow, is the supreme Pastor of his Diocese, and the Parochial Clergy are his Curates in the sense of that Prayer, he has unluckily referr'd to, but not in the vulgar Sense of the Word, which he would insinuate. The word Curate is deriv'd à Curâ, sc. Animarum and is applicable to all the inferior Clergy, to whom the Cure or Care of Souls is committed by Christ, and his Minister the Bishop. Is then the Cure of Souls committed to the Parish Minister? Does his very Name imply so much? And shall he not have the Direction of the Souls, he has the Charge of, without encroaching upon the Power of the Bishop, who under Christ gave it Him? The Powers, he receiv'd from the Bishop, were certainly given him to be exercis'd, and are not revocable at Pleasure by Him, who gave them; Nor does any Clergy-man impair, but rather strengthen the Episcopal Jurisdiction, by performing the several Offices of his Function, in a due Subordination to, and a close Conjunction with his Bishop, who is the Head of the Ministerial Body, and the Center of Christian Unity in his Diocese.

P. 17.

If this be setting up a Kingdom within a Kingdom, 'tis, I am sure, no more, than the Case of all Societies, in which there must be Superior and Sub-

Subordinate Officers; and why the People may not be subject to the general Pastor of their Dioceſe, and to the Direction of their Parish Minister in Particular, who is likewiſe under the Bishop's Direction, and all this without any Inconsistency, I cannot perceive, and he who can, must be much more ſharp-fighted than our Authour.

In ſhort; This and the Reſt of his Reasonings about Parochial Schemes, his Erastian dependency of the Church upon the State, and his precarious Authority of the Civil Powers, have in them all the Mischief of the Rights of the Christian Church with ten Times the Absurdity.

But the worſt of it is, I have gone a little farther, and have happen'd to be ſo ignorant of our Constitution, as to reckon the Difſenters amongſt Thoſe, that are committed to the Charge of the Curate, i. e. the Parſon, as he will have it, and to require them not to ſeparate from the Church without having his Approbation. And this tho' he has dar'd me to it, I have continued in my Third Edition.

P. 20. For to ſpeak plainly, I have often had the Afſurance to read the Exhortation to the Lord's Supper, and have preſum'd to direct my People in the Words of the Church, if they require Comfort or Counsel, to come to Me, or ſome other diſcreet and learned Minister of God's Word for it; ſo that tho' our Church is ſo moderate, as not to confine Men to their own Parish Minister, yet He is first nam'd, as being generally the moſt proper Person; But exhort'd they are to go to ſome Minister, and that too for the Benefit of Abſolution, as well as Advice, without destroying

Epif-

Episcopal Jurisdiction. *And had all, who now Dissent from the Church, resorted to the discreet and learned Ministers of it, before their separation for Advice and Counsel, to overcome their Scruples, and quiet their Consciences, there would have been but few Dissenters now except such as our Authour for whom, I own, my Character was not intended.*

For in this Case, as in that of the Communion, He, who should lay such scruples before me, as Myself, or Others, he should consult, could not remove, would have my Approbation of the Method, he took to make Himself easy, and also of his Separating, till better satisfy'd. And that this is all, I can possibly mean by Approbation in P. 17. of my Character, any Man, who does not love to wrest and torture words into what Meaning, he pleases, will easily discover. For P. 16. I say that the end of consulting the Parochial Minister is, that he, who is inclinable to dissent, may be so satisfy'd as to continue in the Church, or so as that he may the more safely withdraw Himself from it; And P. 18. that having assign'd the Causes of his Separation to Him, who is the proper Judge thereof, he is, when satisfy'd, as ready to return to the Church, as when dissatisfy'd, he was to leave it.

But if the most was made of the word Approbation, our Authour could no more draw the Inference, he does, than he could make Popes of all Parents, because their Children ought to have their Approbation in Matters of Importance. But if he will contend for This too, we shall have a great many more than Ten Thousand Popes, and this Gentleman, who seems to be a Kin to

Diotre-

Diotrepes, and love the Preheminence, may have a fair Chance (and the only One, I dare say, he will ever have) for Infallibility.

Of the like ungenerous Nature is his Sophistical Quibbling upon what I have said, that in verbal Conferences the Honest Dissenter will not have the worse opinion of what is propos'd to him, because 'tis not what he has been

P. 26. *taught, believes, or practices. Yes, says he, he must, and will think it false, if he does not believe it. What? will he be as hasty, as our Authour, and judge without Examination? To what Purpose then is any Conference? Were a Man to set about learning Mathematicks in such a tractable Humour as This, and reject every Proposition, which should at first View appear false to him, whatever Dissenter he might make, tho' he might come to be a Baxter, or a Calamy, I am perswaded he would never be a Newton, or a Hally.*

This Observation is follow'd by such an admirable Lesson about the Rights of Princes, and Obedience to the Civil Powers, as in Compliment to the present Government, he intimates to be the only One these Times will bear. By which 'tis visible, what is the design of Him, and his Party, viz. to look farther, as he calls it, if the pretended Rights of Protestant Dissenters, and their imaginary Civil Interests, i.e. Power and Preferment should be deny'd them.

And what shall we have next in the Name of Wonder? Why truly, Nothing but a Parcel of Trumpery, which Others have had the Patience to answer, as often as the Dissenters and their Friends have had the Confidence to urge it.

But

But P. 33. comes a most surprizing Remark. I have condemn'd Occasional Conformity, and the Degrees, by which some have come over from the Dissenters Quarters to Ours; And this, he says, to keep them at the most Distance from our Assemblies, as if they were to be converted, miraculously in an Instant.

And now would any Man believe, that I had persuad'd the Dissenters to lay aside their Prejudices, to consult the proper Director of their Consciences, to read Books, and manage verbal Conferences freely and impartially, nay even to come to Church, and all this in order to be reconcil'd to our Communion, and yet that I expect their Conversion in a moment? I appeal to the Character, whether This be not an Inconsistency of his own making. If I have condemn'd Occasional Conformity, tis in those, who practise it without any View of returning to the Church, who do it stately, and as much upon Principle, as they separate; In short, 'tis in Those, who coming to Church even with an Opinion, That it's Worship is unlawful, because Unscriptural, condemn Themselves. This they must do, if they join in the Worship; and as for all all those, who do otherwise, who bring their Bodies to Church, and leave their Hearts behind them, however This might have pleas'd our first Reformers, They have my free Consent to make up a Congregation for the Authour of this Letter.

One Thing more I am bound to take Notice of, the Accusation of Profaness brought against me P. 40. by which one would imagine, I had done somewhat more, than only attempted to be witty upon serious, or sacred Matters, as he thinks fit to call a downright

Imposture. I have indeed ridicul'd their Pretence to the Spirit, but not their Prayers, in which they beg it's Assistance. If they deny this their Pretence, they must castrate almost all their Writings, or provide an Index Expurgatorius for them; or if they will still continue to amuse their People with a Notion of Spiritual Prayers, i. e. Prayers at the Time of Praying suggested by the Spirit, they must keep the Methods us'd in their Academies for acquiring Skill and Aptness in this Particular, a greater Secret, than they have done.

The Conclusion of the Letter from P. 44. is most of it a Quotation, which he is so Kind as to give me out of Bishop Burnet's History of the Reformation, lest I should not have read it with as wise Observations, as Himself. His design is visible, and the same with that of the Papists, and other Writers of his Form, to overturn the Constitution of our Church, by destroying the Succession of our Ministry. And this he would fain have you believe was that Prelate's Opinion, viz. that the Succession of Bishop's was interrupted at the Reformation.

Now observe the Craft of the Man, to give it no harder Name; You may expect, says he, that I should set down his Lord-ships Opinion of the Case; But truly his Lordship seems to give up the Point, and rather excuses it from the Confusion the Church was then in, than offers at a plain Vindication. No truly; I did not expect he would deal so fairly by me, or the World, as to give his Lordship's Opinion; But since he is so willing to suppress it, as knowing that every Thing said by that Prelate is of great Weight

Weight with the Dissenters, I will be their Friend for once, and help them to his Lordship's Opinion of this great and important Point.

P. 404. After all that our Authour has quoted, and the Story of the Nagg's-Head Tavern, His Lordship gives Us this excellent Paragraph, relating to Parker's Consecration :

"Some excepted against the Canonicalness of it, because it was not done by all the Bishops of the Province, and 3 of the Bishops had no sees, when they did it, and a 4th was only a Suffragan Bishop. But to all this it was said, that after a Church had been overrun with Heresy, Those Rules, which were to be observ'd in it's more settled State, were always superseded, as appears particularly, when the Arrian Bishops were turn'd out of some great sees; for the Orthodox Bishops did then ordain others to succeed them, without judging themselves bound by the Canons in such Cases. And Bishops that had been rightly consecrated, could certainly derive their own Character to others, whether they were actually in Sees or not. And a Suffragan Bishop, being consecrated in the same manner, that other Bishops were, tho' he had a limited Jurisdiction, yet was of the same Order with Them. All these Things were made out with a great deal of Learning by Mason, who upon the publishing of that Fiction, wrote in Vindication of the English Ministry.

By this Time, I suppose, tis visible for what Reason, Bishop Burnet's Opinion was to be kept such a mighty Secret; But if our Authour will still insist, that his Lordship has given up the Point, i.e. the Validity of Parker's Consecration, let us

H. R. of the
Reform.
vol. II.

go back but a few Years, and we shall find his Lordship offering at a plain Vindication of the Case, in
Anno 1589. N. Barlow a Book entituled, A Vindication of the Ordina-
tions made by the late Consecrators &c.

In this Book P. 76. His Lordship states the
same with what our Authour has collected from
His History. After this he lashes him severely, as
bad he liv'd, he might with better Reason have
serv'd my good Brother, this Letter-Writer,
for having no sort of Ecclesiastical Learning, or
very little moral Honesty. Soon after this he
tells him, That the Consecrators of Matthew
Parker being Bishops by their Order had suffi-
cient Power and Authority to consecrate Him,

P. 79.

^{Left. P. 48. i. e.} Tho' they were only Quondam, Elect, (viz. to
And for these new Sees, having been Diocesan Bishops long be-
consecrators fore in Edward the Sixth's Time) or Suffragan
Bishops only, yet having the Character of Bishops
Barlow Bish. in them, they could ordain, and consecrate, or
of Chichester exercise any of the Powers, which were in them.
^{& Hodskins, §} I shall quote Bishop Burnet no farther. For
Puffeagan of as His whole Book will sufficiently reward any one
Bedford were for consulting it, and is almost entirely upon this
consecrated Subject: So what I have already taken from him is
in Henr. viij. enough to shew, that That Prelate is the most im-
line & the other proper Authour my Friend could have pitch'd upon,
two viz. George unless the Authour, he can pervert most, be most
poor & Scornful to his Purpose.

But if I have not fully made my kind Brother
as appears by amends for his Present of a Piece of History, by
giving Him the Opinion of the Historian (which
the Record. He, poor Man, could not pick out for the Life of
Dat. 6. Dec. 2. him) I hope to be clearly out of his Debt, by refer-
Eliz. and although for a time there going
erators were dispossessed of their Bishopticks
yet their Character of Bishopticks being undiminished
they could not lose the power of consecrating
going their Bishopticks but might consecrate
either of their former offices, as Athanasius

ing him to Mr Hooker's Discourse of Justification, wherein he will find Calvin, Mornay, and Zanchy, all quoted to shew, that the Corruptions in the Church of Rome did not unchurch Her, or take away from Her the Essence of a Christian Church. And by the Help of This, if He be not as much dispos'd to pervert these Authours, as He was to misrepresent Bishop Burnet, he may hope for an Answer to that pithy Question of his, How was the Succession preserv'd?

Our Letter-Writer having thus given us a tast of his Skill in Ecclesiastical History has thought fit to add a Specimen of his Abilities in the Law. He tells us P. 48. that in the Letters Patents for the Consecration of the first Bishops, the Queen, for avoiding all ambignity and Questions that might be objected against the same hath by her Supreme Power and Authority dispensed with all causes and doubts of any imperfection or disability that can or may be objected to it. This as the Statute say's was a Caution which had not been used in Letters Patents of the same Nature, and therefore may give some reason to suspect that the Legality of the Proceeding was not so clear as one could wish it. and this Suspicion *he says* is confirm'd by the Act of Parliament which pass'd in the 8th year of her Reign, declaring all the Consecrations that had been made since the Queens Accession, Valid; any matter or thing that can or may be objected to the contrary notwithstanding. After which He adds in the next page, So that the Parliament, tho' they confirm'd the Bishops in their Sees have virtually declar'd

If it be objected that altho' he had that in a yet falling into Heretical Schism lost his power of Ordination. & that before the Bishop in question consecrated by him received another because ~~he~~ had nothing to give. to w. is another

Mrs. Francon

lawfull consec
tion lost his po
wer of Ordination. & that before the Bishop in
question consecrated by him received another
because ~~he~~ had nothing to give. to w. is another
lawson

that they did not look upon them as good Bishops before this Act pass'd.

In this manner has our honest Author endeav'rd to prove our Bishops to be nothing but mere Creatures of an Act of Parliament. An excellent design and very fit for the Pen of a Clergyman! I could with ease have pass'd over the injurious treatment the slight's and reproaches which He so plentifully bestows upon me, but I confess my Indignation rises when I see him attack the Constitution of our Church by such unworthy and disingenuous methods as one would hope even a Freethinker would blush to make use of, and by asserting things which are directly contradicted by the Authorities he quotes.

For the Act of Parliament he mentions is so far from virtually declaring that the Bishops were not good Bishops before the passing that Act that it several times asserts the Contrary in the strongest and most express Terms imaginable. §. 1. Forasmuch as divers Questions by overmuch boldness of Speech and talk amongst many of the common sort of People being unlearned, hath lately grown upon the making and consecrating of Arch-Bishops and Bishops within this Realm, whether the same were and be duly and orderly done according to Law or not, which is much tending to the Slander of all the state of Clergy being one of the greatest states of this Realm therefore for the avoiding of such slanderous speech and to the Intent that every man that is willing to know the Truth, may plainly understand that the same evil speech and talk is not grounded upon any just matter or cause, it is thought

that the Episcopal character is so indelible convenient no schism no Heretic no censures of the Church against communion suspension interdiction Degradation nor paved death can efface it so that deriving from any other thing either before or after the baptizing they do better they must needs be accounted heretics

convenient hereby partly to touch such Authorities which do allow and approve the making and consecrating of the same Arch-Bishops and Bishops to be duly and orderly done according to the Laws of this Realm, and thereby further to provide for the more surety thereof. §. 2. --- so that to all those who will well consider of the Effect and true Intent of the said Laws and Statutes it is and may be very evident and apparent that no cause of Scruple Ambiguity or Doubt can or may justly be objected against the said Elections Confirmations or Consecrations, or any other material thing meet to be us'd or had in or about the same; but that every thing requisit or material for that purpose hath been made or done as precisely, and with as great a Care and Diligence, or rather more, as ever the like was done before her Majesties time. §. 4. --- All Persons that have been and shall be made ordain'd or consecrated Arch-Bishops Bishops, &c. be in very deed and also by Authority hereof declared and enacted and shall be Arch-Bishops, Bishops, &c. any Statute Law Canon or other thing to the contrary notwithstanding.

It will I believe sufficiently appear by this time what Credit is to be given to an Author of this Stamp, whose Mistakes cannot be the effects of pure Ignorance. Who has the Confidence to appeal to an Act of Parliament to prove the Illegality of the Bishops Ordinations, tho' that very Act was made with no other view but to put a stop to such a groundless clamor, declares it to be a slander upon the

*They say if these allegationes should be found
to be true then the See of Worcester & Thurlby and
in Queen Mary's time must be cancelled out of
the Catalogue of Bishops.*

Clergy and to have arisen purely from over much boldness of speech among the Unlearned and Common sort of People. and tho' it affirms that all persons that have been made or consecrated Arch-Bishops or Bishops be in very deed Arch-Bishops and Bishops, and that no Doubt or Scruple can justly be objected against the said Consecrations; yet our Author it seems has thought fit to assure his Reader that this Parliament has virtually declar'd that the Bishops were not good Bishops before the passing this Act. Whether there be less wisdom or honesty in thus perverting and contradicting an Act of Parliament which He himself appeals to, I shall leave to my Reader to determine.

What satisfaction this Gentleman may have taken in his performance I know not but have reason to think the Dissenters will have no pretence for boasting of their Champion who has supported their cause by an old exploded objection borrow'd from the Papists without any addition of his own but that of prevarication and false dealing and who has thought fit to pass upon the World under the disguise of a Clergy-man for no other end but more effectually to undermine the honor of the Order and the Interests of the Church. And with this pious design has with equal learning and probity done his best to furnish the adversaries of Religion with an Argument which He could not but know has been effectually answer'd by Burnet, Mason, Bramhall and Strype as well as by his own Act of Parliament.

And now, since I have but little Time to spare from the Employment of a large Parish, have not the good Fortune to meet with Contributions for
Printing

Printing, as I did for Building, have little Assurance to recommend, or Interest to disperse my Performance, and None at all with the useful Society of London Hawkers, I shall take my leave of him once for all; And if He thinks fit to reply, and fatigue the World with any more scurrilous Reflections upon Me, or shallow Reasonings against the Church, I shall give no other Answer to this insulting Adversary, than the Lord rebuke Thee.

Dear Sir,

Candlemass Day 171⁶

I Have read Your Character of an honest Dissenter, the Letter to You, and Your Answer: And, if You will have my judgment of the performance, I shall readily tell You, I think, You have honour'd this wretched Pamphleteer too much in taking any notice of him at all; He is below You: He and I now, or any two Writers of our Form, might write and write on to the end of the Chapter, and give diversion enough to any, who were so idle, as to read our Works.

You indeed have with great Piety and Learning solidly Confuted all the Cavils, which could be made, and I find, have taken Your leave of him, I therefore give You the trouble of this, to desire You to acquaint this Your Good Brother, this same Clergyman, that I tho' Lay-man, and as much ashamed of my Name, as he can be, do intend to answer whatever he shall hereafter write upon this Topic; I am, as Idle, as he; Am in as little danger of losing Reputation by writing silly Stuff, as he; and

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Can and Will drink Coffee at the Græcian, as well as he ; and Intend in a very little time, to meet him there agen, among the Adepts, and hear his Elaborate Discourses. I shall value Argument as little as he, and write only ad hominem : He will be so much taken up in Speeching, for some months to come, that I know, he will not be able to dish up any great matter, till Autumn : And, Pray let him know, that If he is so Lavish of his Thoughts in Puhlick, as he uses to be, I will both Write a Book for him, and Answer it too, before that time.

Will You Give me Leave to shew You a Specimen of the fair Way of writing among these little, absurd, Freethinking Pamphlet Writers.

Suppose I have a mind to Abuse all Ordinations, Ministry's, divine Missions, Apostolical Institutions, Church Discipline, or any such little Trifle ; I take the first book I meet, and answer it, Whether it be a Character of a Dissenter, Or, an Account of China, Or, a Calculation of Southsea Stock : I Play about a little, 'till I can hook in some of the abovemention'd Terms, and then Gravely say, "Perhaps You have not read such a Piece of History, I will therefore take the Pains to give it you at large ; And then I tell you a long lying Story about the Consecration of Arch-Bishop Parker. Or, If I have a mind to call all the Clergy of the Church of England R---s at once, I only say, "Fie, Brother, Fie ! Why will you print what you know is not to be defended ? "We all own, you know, This is Rank Priestcraft : "tis Confest, there is not a Syllable of Truth in all "We Pretend, only to Amuse the silly Laity, and "present

"preserve our Power. And then Add, with a care-less Air, "But this by the bye. P. 4. Seriously, Sr, Can there be any thing written so absurd, so Pre-varicating, so false, and so bewraying of Ignorance, as the 4th Page of the Letter ? No ! Even the Rest of his own Book, comes not up to it.

He pretends to be a Clergy-man, and yet owns, he does not beleive, what he professes ; Nay, owns he believes it to be false.

He pretends to be a Scholar, and a Logician, and yet says, the Dissenters have the better of the Controversy.

He Trifles about Ceremonies, and the Nature of Schism; yet pretends to be an Unprejudic'd Searcher After Truth : And he Prevaricates so about Excommunication, (a Word, he has been told, signify's something near akin to Popery) that to hear him talk of Imposing, One would think the Church had Impos'd a Tax of at least 4s in the Pound.

The Truth is, He cares not what he says ; He is as little a Dissenter, (from this Pamphlet, I judge) as he is a Church of England man : And, on which side soever the Borough may be, I dare say he does not know on which side the Tweed, his Church is.

He laughs at all Religion, and all Succession of Priests, (as a Graver man than he, to his shame be it spoken, has since done) hates the Church and the Dissenters only secundum magis & minus and Halloo's One side against the Other, only to set them by the Ears together.

Such as I have Describ'd this Ingenious Writer to be, (and such he is) Yet will I take him for my

(28)

my Play-fellow for some time, till We likewise have Wrote our Selves Out. I would only Warn him of one thing; Let him have a care of being Witty or Aiming to be so, in a Wrong place. I am a Devilish Fellow at setting Snares, and when he may think himself securest, then I have him fastest in my Trap. Let him Carefully Consider this Motto, Nè SHUTOR ultra Crepidam; Which makes me fear His Letter to You will be his Last.

I am &c.

By Dr Hamilton late Fellow
of All Souls Oxon.

ERRAT. p. 28. l. 8. pro Shutor lege Sutor.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

HE, that discovers, what One Man is, and places him in publick View, always intimates to Others, what they should, or should not be: This is the Use of, and thus much may be learn'd by a Character; in which it should be always easy and obvious to determine, whether it deserves our Aversion, or our Imitation.

The Character, I here present the World with, I must confess, is not drawn from any One single Person; but is composed of the several Qualifications, which are necessary to make up the Honest Man, I propose to describe: And I must unwillingly add, that, I fear, there will be few Dissenters, who upon Examination will find Themselves exactly corresponding to the following Character. I do not therefore publish This to their

The PREFACE.

their Reproach, but, as Honesty, on my own Part, obliges me, for their Reformation. I would have every Man, of what Perswasion soever, Conscientiously discharge his Duty; for what is the Motive of my Writing, should be the Rule of Men's Lives, viz. To act according to the Best of what they are, or can be inform'd of: This I take to be more particularly a reasonable Demand upon Them, who are ever pleading Conscience, and Perswafion; And I must needs say, that, did every Dif-fenter strictly perform the several Parts, express'd in the following Character, (and, whether He ought to do so, or not, I take to be no Question,) I am verily perswaded, our unhappy Schisims would dwindle away apace: The Honest Dissenters would soon become Honest Church-men; and we shoud, in a very short Time, enjoy Peace, Unity, and Concord: For which, as our Litany justly prays, We beseech Thee to hear us, Good Lord.

THE

THE
CHARACTER
OF AN
Honest Dissenter, &c.

I.

THE Honest Dissenter is sincerely desirous of Unity: He is earnestly solicitous, that all Christians may be of one Mind; And, tho' he Separates from the Establish'd Church, and so interrupts the Peace of it, yet this he does not do for the sake of Separation: He had much rather join with the Church, if he could do it with an easy and quiet Conscience, so that his Separation is not a Matter of Humour alone, but of Necessity.

Whatever be Men's Notions of Moral Honesty, yet in the Business of reveal'd Religion, we must determine, what is Honest, by its Conformity to Revelation; so that, tho' there are indeed Arguments to be brought from Reason, from the joint Interests, and mutual Benefits of Mankind, which may induce to, and

and encourage Unity ; yet will these prevail no farther, than they serve such Interests, and produce such Benefits : If these be the only Motives, upon which Men are *Honest*, when they cease, it will not be thought *Dis-honest*, to act after a different Manner ; and it will be a difficult Task to perswade Men, by Principles of Morality alone, to do one Thing, when according to their own Judgment, the Advantages of others, or themselves, point out Another. But, when we make a standing Revelation the Touch-stone of *Honesty*, when we fix it upon this sure and immovable Foundation, it will never vary from its Standard, but it must change its Nature. 'Tis a Christian *Honesty* therefore, which I speak of, more particularly in this first and main Part of the *Character* ; and I doubt not, but it will appear, that the Man, who is endued with it, must of Necessity be in every Point answerable to the *Character* here given of him.

But as to the *Honesty* afterwards described, I intend not to oblige my self to produce *Scrip-ture-Proofs* for every Part thereof ; but desire to be thus understood, that the *Honest* Man endeavours to square all his Actions according to the best Information, he either hath, or can have from *Reason*, or *Revelation*. For, tho' it is not probable, that it should often so happen, yet a Man may appear Just in his common Dealings with his Neighbours, and Upright in his Conversation, without being that *Honest* Man, which he ought to be ; without consulting

sulting *Reason* and *Scripture*, to determine all his Actions by, particularly to direct him in Religious Principles, and the Worship of God.

But to proceed in the Illustration of this *Character*; That the *Honest Dissenter* should be desirous of Unity in Religion, is no more, than that he should be Religious, there being a *Society* in Religion, and the Nature of a *Society*, the Preservation of it at least, consisting in *Unity*: So that in short, be a Man's Perswasion, what it will, and whatever Religion he professes, yet, as he is a *Member* of that *Body*, which professes the same, he is thereby oblig'd as far as 'tis in his Power, to preserve and maintain the Union of all the *Members* of it.

But the *Christian Religion* carries this Point yet farther; and not only from the Nature of a *Church* in Common with all other *Societies*, but in a particular Manner, from the Precepts of its holy *Author*, enforces that *Unity* upon all its *Members*, without being heartily desirous of which no Man can *Honestly profess, and call himself a Christian*. The *Honest Dissenter* therefore is willing to be of the same *Mind* with all others of *Christ's Disciples*; or, which is the very same in Effect, would have them be *like-minded* with him; because, as to this particular, he finds in holy *Scripture*, not only most pressing Entreaties, both of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*, address'd to their Followers; but also most ardent Prayers, put up by them, to the *Almighty* upon this very Account, and argumen-

mentative Reasons urg'd for Men's own Endeavours after the same.

Thus, not to multiply Instances, our blessed Saviour, not long before his Departure from 'em, recommended Peace to his *Disciples*, as the dearest Pledge of his Love, that he could leave 'em ; Thus does he beseech the *Father*, that they may in their Union resemble that mysterious, close and inseparable Union between the *Father* and the *Son* ; and the more effectually to compleat this, he informs them, that they must all of 'em jointly continue in *Him*, as the *Branches* do in a *Vine*, and that if any of 'em should be separated from *Him*, or from *one another*, either of which implies both, the Consequence of this would be, that they would soon *wither*, and so become of no farther Use, than to be gathered into *Bundles*, and *Burned*.

Nor is St. Paul's Zeal for Unity less remarkably express'd, when he represents the *Church* in that admirable Figure, *the Members of the Body*. How Earnest is he with Men, that, *if it be possible, and as much as lieth in them, they would live peaceably?* And in how particular a Manner does he conclude his Charge to the *Corynthians*, with the same divine Lesson ; *Be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.*

And as to the Union of that particular, *National Church*, which is *Established* in the Country, where he lives ; This is to the *Honest Dissenter* as the *Catholick Church* : For he cannot join

join with the Catholick Church, but by joining with some particular Part of it: Therefore, as to the Communion of This, his Desire is the same, viz. That all should join in it; so that, as I have mentioned in his *Character*, tho' he does Separate, he is still a Lover of Union, but is not able to effect it, by Conforming with the rest of his Country-Men, or by inducing them to Conformity with himself. He is not able, I say, i. e. *Conscientiously* he cannot do it; he thinks he should highly Displease God, by his Communion with the Establish'd Church, and therefore he forbears: And he has that Reason for his Separation, which alone (if any thing) can justify him in it, that he should otherwise be guilty of a known and wilful Sin, the Commission of which his Conscience can by no Means bear, or approve of.

II.

The Honest Dissenter may be One, that has been educated in the Separation, by Parents of the same Perswasion: Or One, that has been brought up in the Establish'd Church, but finding somewhat in it, which he could not in Conscience comply with, was therefore perswaded to leave it. If then the Former be his Case, that he was educated in Separation, when he comes to Tears of Discretion, he cannot rest, without soberly, carefully, and impartially making an Enquiry into the Grounds of his Separation. If the Latter be his Case, he does not leave the Church, without being convinced, that 'tis Sinful for him to continue in it.

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That there are many *Dissenters* of both these Kinds, is not to be question'd; and as to those of the former Sort, I here charge them not with the Neglect of such Examination of their Principles, as I have affirm'd to be requir'd of them: But I am perswaded, that there is one great Fault, which runs almost thro' the whole Body of those, that Separate from us; that whereas they are taught to cavil at, and inveigh against our *Liturgy*, there are many of 'em, who are so little acquainted with it, that they hardly know it from the *Alcoran*; like the giddy Rabble in the grand Rebellion, they can cry out *No Bishops*, tho' neither the Name, nor the Office of a *Bishop*, is any more understood by 'em, than that of a *Brachman*, or *Mufti*: And their general Answer, nay, all that they are able to reply, when question'd about their Separation, and the Grounds of it, is, *Mr. such an One, naming their respective Teacher, is able to give you an Answer*; Go talk with him; I wish he were here, &c.

And if to this they object, as they commonly do, that those of the *Church* are as Ignorant as themselves; that the common People amongst them also, are as unable to give an Account of their Principles, and to defend the Order of *Bishops*, the *Liturgy*, &c. as they are to shew good Reasons for their Dislike to 'em; to this I answer, that 'twere to be wish'd indeed, that all of the Inferior Rank of Men were much wiser, than they are, in the great and mo-

momentous Business of Religion: But when we speak of the Necessity of such Information, as relates to Controversy in Religion, they, who oppose that which is *Establish'd*, are most certainly obliged to have solid Grounds, and substantial Reasons, for such their Opposition; whereas they, who in Conformity to the Establishment, and in Obedience to their Governors, continue in the *Church*, are not equally bound to defend and maintain every Point of their Communion. For to make this clearer; A Man certainly may live in Submission and Obedience to the *Prince*, who is in actual Possession of the Throne, without any Obligation to prove such an One's Title to every Part of his Dominions: Whereas he, who refuses his Allegiance, is unquestionably bound in Conscience to disprove his Title, to whom he denies Subjection; and to defend that of the Other, to whom he joins himself, and whom he acknowledges to be his supreme and lawful Governor. But, whatever Men may think of this Illustration, yet 'tis apparently the Business of every one, who rejects any thing, that is generally received, tho' it be but a mere and indifferent Custom, to have just Cause for his Dissent. And, to put this beyond all Dispute, Governors being to be Obey'd in all things Lawful, 'tis sufficient for those, who Obey, to be perswaded, that the things are Lawful, in which they do so; but as for those, who oppose themselves to any Commands of their Governors, which Multitudes comply with as Law.

Lawful, they must be able to prove them otherwise. For the Former, if they are mistaken, do but a good thing, i.e. Obey for want of sufficient Information; whereas the Latter, if they err, do an ill thing, i.e. Disobey, for want of rightly Informing themselves.

Did we therefore allow, that the common People, in our *Church*, were unable to defend the Terms of their Communion, against all Gain-sayers; yet, I fear, their *holding fast* that, which is generally approv'd of as good, without *proving all things*, will be but an ordinary Vindication of those, who *hold fast* that, which is as generally condemn'd as Evil, without *proving whether it be so, or not*. If those of the *Establish'd Church* are bound to examine and understand the lawfulness of their Communion, as is here objected; there can, I'm sure, be no Reason alledg'd for the *Dissenters* being exempted from making the same Enquiry; And this is what I contend for, desiring those, who have been educated in Separation, impartially to enquire, whether they ought to continue in, or to forsake it; and those, who have the Care of 'em, to allow of this their *Honest* Endeavour to satisfy their Consciences; to give them Leave to use the proper Methods of Information, and not to constrain 'em blindly to follow their Fore-Fathers, to remain *Schismatics*, because they were Born, and Bred so, and to subscribe themselves Disciples of a *separate* Congregation, before they know, upon what Terms, they may be admitted to that, which

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is Establish'd: Nor will that vain Pretence, which some have made, excuse them from this Enquiry into the Terms of Church-Communion, viz. That because they were Born and Bred, what we call *Dissenters*, and were never in the *Church of England*, they do not therefore *Dissent*, or *Separate* from the *Church*. For the Charge of not joining with the *Church* is the same with that of leaving it. Both are equally forbidden by the Laws, which enjoin *Church-Communion*; and if there be Sin in the One, there is Sin in the Other.

And now to be brief with the second Sort of *Dissenters*, viz. Those, who leave the *Church* after they are come to Years of Discretion; 'Tis a lamentable Observation, that so many make their own private Piques and Disgusts the Cause of Separation; that some run away from the *Church*, upon some petty, trifling Quarrel with their *Minister*, some, because they have discover'd that those of the *Church* are not so Good, as they should be; and that others forsake it professedly for no other Reason, but to hear a more able, and better-gifted *Teacher*: whereas the Peace and Unity of the *Church* is not a Matter of so little Importance: 'Tis, as I before observ'd, to be industriously maintain'd, when it can be done without Sin; and 'tis justly to be fear'd, that he, who so undervalues Unity, as to suffer any trivial Cause to be the Occasion of his violating it, will as little value, and as easily upon Occasion give up any other Point of his Religion.

III.

As a Consequence of the former Part of the fore-going Character, the Honest Dissenter reads those Books, which are wrote for, or against his Opinion, with Impartiality; And when he enters into any Conference about his Perswasion, he sets himself as free as possible, from all Prejudices and Prepossessions, with Respect to either side, resolv-ing to be determin'd by Reason, to follow Conviction, and to embrace the Truth, on which side soever it appears to be.

Since true Principles, and Unity in the Christian Church, are of no less Consequence to Men, than, that their Salvation depends upon them: a Man must deal most fallaciously and treacherously with himself, who suffers his Mind to be so far prejudic'd for any Opinion, as to apply himself to such Books only, as he already knows by the general Character of 'em, agree with his present Thoughts, favour his Inclinations, and confirm his Tenets: But on the other Hand, condemns without Law or Trial all, that by the same Information, i. e. by the general Character of 'em, he knows to be otherwise; For as this is a monstrous Piece of Injustice to the Authors of the Books, he thus injudiciously censures, and to the Cause, for which they wrote them: so likewise is it dangerous, and sometimes fatal to the Persons themselves; who, if they should be in an Error, are thereby, without a Miracle, under a Kind of Impossibility of being undeceiv'd.

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The same Method, since there is Nothing either False or Vicious, but what has been patroniz'd and defended, would put a Man of any Principles, or Practice, out of the Reach of Recovery ; and so, he who is once got out of the Way, would be fated to eternal Wandring, would still pursue the *Ignis Fatuus*, that had mis-led him, and being under the Direction of a false Guide, must for ever continue in the Delusion.

But particularly in the Case before us, to hear, or see Nothing, but continual Revilings of the *Constitution* of our *Church*, to be convinc'd of the Imperfections in our *Liturgy*, without ever Reading it, or consulting those, who are the proper Expositors of it ; to reject the *Order of Bishops*, without looking into the *Scriptural Institution* of 'em, or examining the *History* of their *Succession* ; to prefer the Efficacy of *conceiv'd Prayer* to that which is *Compos'd*, without experiencing the Influence of Each, by an equal Attention, or equally endeavouring to attend to Both ; what is all this, I say, but a partial Indulgence of Prejudice, a positive Refusal of Information, and in direct Contradiction to the *Apostle's Advice*, an *Holding fast* that, which we already have made Choice of, whether good, or evil, without *Proof*, *Trial*, or *Examination* of any thing besides ?

This therefore the *Honest Dissenter* will never be Guilty of ; He has consulted those Passages of *Scripture*, and those Testimonies of *Antiquity*, which are made Use of to Establish

blish the Necessity of the *Episcopal Order*; He has upon the fairest Examination, he could make, found, as he conceives, all these Proofs deficient, and therefore, tho' the *Order* be good, yet he does not think it *Necessary*; tho' *Episcopal Government* be useful, yet he will not submit to it, when impos'd, as absolutely not to be dispens'd with; and tho' he allows the *Ordination* by *Bishops* to be valid, as containing in it that of *Presbyters*, yet he has discover'd *That* by *Presbyters* alone to be equally valid, and therefore to be all, that is requisite. Again, he has examin'd Objections made against our *Liturgy*, by carefully viewing and listing, seriously considering and weighing the Force of every Objection, and candidly allowing all possible Favour to the Answers, he finds given to them; and after all, he does not think the Flaws sufficiently clear'd, accounted for, and vindicated. Lastly, He has gone to *Church* with a Pious Intention of being Devout; he has, when there, comply'd with, and endeavour'd to Pray with the *Congregation*, by stifling all Prejudice, and quickning his Attention as much, as possible; but in the Conclusion he perceives, that he has not Pray'd, and that he cannot do it effectually in a *pre-composed Form*; he thinks the Service he has perform'd, less Acceptable to *God*, and less Beneficial to *himself*, than what he us'd to perform in a *separate Assembly*.

As for his Objection against the Preaching of his *Parish-Minister*, as being Useless and Un-

Unedifying, this is what I do not, at present, propose fully to answer ; tho' tis what scarce any Wise, or *Honest Man*, will think a sufficient Ground of Separation. 'Tis unfortunate indeed for any People, to have such a *Pastor*, as they justly dislike ; especially, if his Faults are such, as tend to prevent the Efficacy of his *Preaching* ; But to a well-dispos'd Mind, the very worst *Sermons* are not without their beneficial Influence.

Thus has the *Honest Dissenter* endeavour'd to lay aside all Prejudice ; and indeed without his doing so, as there is no hope of his ever discovering himself to be in an Error ; so were he in the Right, there is not the least Shadow of an Excuse for him, because he is in the Right, only thro' a blind and ignorant Prejudice. If he has not in each Particular, I have mention'd, fought after all the Information, that he could, he has not acted the Part of either a Wise, or an *Honest Man* ; Both which will for ever hold this, as a Maxim, which *Reason*, *Religion*, and *Christianity* in particular enforces, that a Man's Opinion and Practice must be directed by the best Knowledge, he has, or can have of the things, about which they are concern'd.

And here, as thro' the whole of this *Character*, 'tis not my Design to dispute the Points controverted between *Us*, and the *Dissenters*, but only to shew, what he, who does dispute 'em, is bound to do, if he will acquit himself Fairly and *Honestly* ; And the Rules here laid down will hold good, as often, as the *Honest Dissenter* en-

gages in any Conference about the Differences between *Him*, and the *Church*. Herein he will always allow, what is urg'd against him, its full *Weight*, tho' he finds it be enough to bear him *down*; He will have never the worse Opinion of any thing, because 'tis not, what he has been taught, believes, or practises; but will have that profound Veneration for Truth, which it deserves, *i. e.* give it *Leave* to convince him. And, tho' I shall not here undertake to determine, what is due Conviction, or what Degree of it ought to influence a Man to his Conversion, because the Inequality of Disputants may make great Alterations in this Point; yet thus much, I think, is certain, that, who-ever engages in a *Controversy*, is bound to yield, when he can no longer maintain his Cause against the Arguments, with which he is attack'd; and that, till by himself, or some other he can clearly, and impartially answer them, they are to him as binding, as any Truth can be, *i. e.* so far, as to demand Assent; the Consequence of which I leave to himself.

As for the Shame of departing from Error, which, I fear, is the best Reason, that many *Dissenters* can give, for the Stiffness, with which they hold and maintain their *Separation*, I must needs say, that I take it to be much more for a Man's Credit, to forsake an Error upon sufficient Conviction, than never to have been in an Error at all. This at least I will confidently affirm, that 'tis a Shame for any Man to continue in the Wrong, because he will not be at the

the Pains of setting himself Right ; and that 'tis the greatest Shame of all, for a Man, who knows himself to be in the Wrong, to continue so upon any Account whatever. This himself acknowledges, when for fear of Shame, he declines his Conversion ; for if he be ashamed to have been mis-led, the being still in the same Condition must make him more so, and must as much aggravate his Shame, as voluntarily acting against Knowledge , can heighten and enhance Folly or Transgression.

IV.

The Honest Dissenter, who separates from the Church, after he is come to Years of Discretion, does not continue long in any separate Congregation, without consulting his Parochial Minister, and laying before him all the Objections, he makes against the Church.

This, because to my certain Knowledge 'tis but seldom, if ever paid them, may be look'd upon as an unreasonable Demand in the Clergy of the Church of England; and the rather, because whatever be the real Occasion of Separation, yet generally the Pretence, which those, who Separate after an Education in the Church, make use of, is some Dislike, some Pique or Distaste, they have conceived against their Parochial Minister. It seems therefore too severe, that Men should be thus confin'd to one Congregation, that they should be so subject to the Pastor of that, as not to be at Liberty to reject him, when they please ; or indeed, that they should

should have any manner of Restraint upon 'em, should be oblig'd to pay any Submission to, or own any Dependance upon him, who is appointed to *watch for their Souls.*

But I need go no farther for Proof, or Illustration of this Part of the *Character*, than only to observe, that, whilst any Man continues in the *Church*, or indeed whilst he continues a Member of any Congregation, he submits himself, and his Conscience to the Direction of the Pastor of that *Congregation*. This the *Dissenters* themselves acknowledge, in that they reject their *Parochial Ministers*, and make Choice of others, whom they set up for their Guides, from whom they receive Instruction, and whom they support for this very End and Purpose. Now a Pastor, a Guide, or Overseer of Souls, or whatever else they please to call him, can be no one of all these, if it be not his Busines to assist his Flock in those things, wherein they chiefly want his Assistance, *viz.* in the Scruples and Doubts, which arise in their Consciences. Whenever these unfortunately disturb a Man's inward Peace, then is his Pastor of signal Use and Service to him; and therefore when these are of that Kind, as to induce a Man to leave the *Church*, such Doubts and Scruples being of as great Consequence, as most others, that can happen to him, they must be such, as his *Pastor* should be made acquainted with, in order to quiet his Conscience; and so to satisfy him, that he may continue in the *Church*, or so, that he may the more safely withdraw himself from it.

it. 'Till he has left the *Church*, the *Minister* of his *Parish* is undoubtedly the Guide and Director of his Soul, and its Concerns ; He is the Person, whom the Laws of God and Man have set and appointed to attend upon this very thing : The Objections a Man makes against the *Church* are *spiritual Concerns* ; And therefore, unless he will say, that he first left the *Church*, and then rais'd Objections against it, having had none at all before, the hearing and solving of those Objections, which he has, must belong to him, who was his *Pastor*, when these Distempers and Sores first broke out and appear'd in his Soul.

Now amongst the Many, who revolt from Us, how few there are, but what would be prevented and cur'd in their first Inclinations to *Schism*, if this Method were made Use of, I leave any Man to judge ; And yet is it possible to conceive, that in a *Christian Church*, to which a *Ministry* is absolutely Essential, any Man should be so far his own Guide and Director, as in *spiritual Matters* of the highest Concern and Importance to determine without the Knowledge, Advice and Approbation of his *spiritual Guide* ? The *Honest Dissenter*, I'm sure, will think, and say otherwise ; he will confess, that whilst he continu'd in the *Church*, his *Parish Minister* was his Shepherd ; that he left not his Flock, but for such Reasons, as he had first communicated to *Him* : and that if he could have answer'd his Objections, and made him easy, he would never have revolted to another Communion, Subjected himself to another *Pastor*,

Pastor, and become a Member of another Congregation. Or, if he has done this hastily and without due Consideration, yet he soon after gives in to him, who is the proper Judge thereof, the Reasons of his Departure, he assigns the Causes of his Separation, and is, when satisfy'd, as ready to return to the *Church*, as, when dis-satisfy'd, he was to leave it.

V.

Tho' he joins with a separate Congregation, and employs Part of his Substance in the Maintenance of a separate Teacher, yet the Honest Dissenter does not withhold, what is legally due, from his Parochial Minister.

And this indeed many of the *Dissenters* are so *Honest* as to acknowledge, and practise accordingly; And yet some of 'em are apt to withhold Sythes, and other Dues, as deeming it hard, that they should be oblig'd to maintain those, who do nothing for 'em, and to whom therefore there seems nothing to be due. And here because it would be but to little Purpose to assert the Divine Right, which the *Clergy* have to their Maintenance, because the *Dissenters* may imagine, that upon this Footing, their Claim is as good, as that of any others; let it therefore be sufficient, and sufficient indeed it is at present, that Humane Laws have secur'd to the *Clergy* of the *Church of England*, their Revenues, and have establish'd their Title to them, as firmly and uncontestedly, as that of any other Man's Estate or Possessions.

But

But there is one Thing, which probably many *Dissenters* are unacquainted with ; viz. That Offerings are as much, and as legally due, as Tythes ; what any Man gives his Minister over and above the accustomed Offering, is indeed, as they please to call it, a Free-Will-Offering, and their Minister is oblig'd to 'em for such Instances of the Respect and Reverence they bear towards him : But the accustomed Offerings are due by Law ; and since what is so due, the *Honest Dissenter* thinks he ought to pay, without Trouble, or, if there be none made, even without a Demand, therefore he readily and chearfully pays his Parochial Minister all his lawful Tythes, and his accustomed Offerings.

VI.

The Honest Dissenter is constant to one Congregation, and does not join with every Assembly of Separatists indistinctly.

There is indeed a vain Notion got into some Men's Heads, or at least they pretend to be so perswaded, that a Man not only may, but in Charity ought, sometimes to join himself to every Assembly of Christians meeting together for the Worship of God. But, if as I've already shew'd, the Necessity of Unity in the Christian Church, forbids all *Separation* from that which is Establish'd, unless the Terms of its Communion be Sinful ; then whoever *separates* from the *Church of England*, because there is such a Disagreement between his own Principles, and those

of

of the Church, that he cannot reconcile them, must for the same Reason refuse to join with any other Sect, between whom and himself there is any irreconcilable Disagreement.

To put this Case a little more plainly; If that Sect, which goes under the Denomination of *Presbyterians*, disagrees with another Sect, call'd *Anabaptists*, in as Material a Point, as those, in which they differ, and for which they separate from the *Church*, they can then no more join with the *Anabaptists*, than with the *Church*, nor, *vice versa*, the *Anabaptists* with them: And whether the Point of Infant-Baptism be not as Material, as any Point in Controversy between those of the *Church* and the *Presbyterians*, I appeal to any Man, who knows to what Height this Controversy has been carried by those, who oppose Infant-Baptism, or who has any Notion at all of the Nature, Necessity, and Institution of that Sacrament.

For if this be to the *Anabaptists* a sufficient Ground of *Separation*, it is certainly a sufficient Ground for their refusing to join with all those, who Baptize Infants, which 'tis manifest the *Presbyterians* profess to do: And if it be sufficient to warrant the *Anabaptists*, in not joining with the *Presbyterians*, it seems to me not only sufficient, to warrant the *Presbyterians*, in not joining with them, but even to oblige and necessitate their doing so. But if in Opposition to the *Church*, and to maintain and strengthen a Party against it, they will *both* hold together, tho' their Principles are so widely different, What

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Submission and Condescension ought they to make for the Sake of Unity ? If holding Principles irreconcilable, they can join themselves, as 'tis evident they do, to one another's Congregations and Communions ; nothing hinders, but that they may join themselves to the *Church*, notwithstanding their Disagreement with it in some Particulars : And if *Separation*, which is the main thing in common amongst our several *Sectarists*, induces 'em to join with one another, Unity with the *Church*, one woudl imagine, should be as good an Inducement to the joining with *It*. This therefore, I say, the *Honest Dissenter* is appriz'd of ; He enters into no Combination against the *Church* with Men, who have no other Principle, upon which they can recommend themselves to him, but that of their *Separation* ; And he rather condemns those, who separate from the *Church* upon those Points, in which he could, and does agree with it, and which would not be to him, had he no other, sufficient Grounds of *Separation*.

VII.

The Honest Dissenter does not allow himself in Occasional Conformity ; in being generally in Communion with a separate Congregation, and sometimes with the establish'd Church.

This Mark of an *Honest Dissenter* has been allow'd by so many of themselves to be just, that I should not think, there were any Occasion to insist upon it here, did not some of them main-

D tain,

tain, as I have just now observ'd, that a Man ought to join with all Congregations of Christians meeting together for the Worship of God; tho', by the by, I do not know, that ever any Man, who had the least Notion of Unity in the *Christian Church*, thought it so trifling and indifferent a Matter, whether it be preserv'd, or whether it be interrupted; or did ever answer this One Argument brought against the *Occasional Conformists*, That, if it be ever lawful to Communicate with the *Church*, 'tis always so; and if always lawful, then always necessary. And 'tis upon the Strength of this, that I make him to be an *Honest Dissenter*, who refuses to *Conform Occasionally* to the *Church*; not because the very *Act* of such *Occasional Conformity* is a Sin, but because he, who does not constantly, what, *by Occasionally doing it*, he allows to be lawful, breaks the Unity of the *Church*, and when confessedly upon no Account he is necessitated to do so.

But their Conscience tells some of them, that this is what they ought to do, that they must generally *separate* from the *Church*, and yet *Occasionally* join with it, and what their Conscience bids them do, they are bound to perform, notwithstanding all the Reasons, that can be urg'd to the Contrary. This, for ought I know, may be really the Case of some Men, and this may be their Perswasion. But, I'm sure, whatever Difference there is in Men's Principles and Actions, if the foregoing Pretence will *sanctify* them, the *Papist* or *Mahometan*, the *Muderer* or *Adul-*

Adulterer may plead the same Enthusiastical Excuse ; and the *Dissenters* in many Cases, where they will not justify the Actions, must of Necessity justify the Men, who commit them.

I have but one thing more to add, with Respect to *Occasional Conformity*, viz. That if the Men, who are guilty of it, do thereby intend to prevail upon some of the more lukewarm and indifferent Members of our *Church*, *Occasionally to Conform* to them, (which, I'm apt to think, is a Point of Policy amongst them) I shall consider this farther under the following Mark, viz.

VIII.

The Honest Dissenter has a real and just Value for Integrity and Sincerity in all Persons ; As therefore he lightly esteems those, who generally Conform to the Separatists, and Occasionally to the Church : So likewise he entertains a mean Opinion of Lukewarmness in those of the Church ; and he thinks but the worse of them, for Conforming generally to the Church, and Occasionally to some separate Congregation.

As for those Men, who generally set a great Value upon themselves, as Men of Moderation, they are the very worst Sort of Men amongst us ; they have not the least Spark of a Religious Zeal in them, or the least Notion of Constancy and Steadiness, Regularity and Uniformity ; but thro' a Kind of Loosness, Indifference, and Lukewarmness in Religion, are contented with the Generals of it, as if to Believe in God, and

and to *Worship* him, could possibly be perform'd without making particular Attributes and Perfections the Object of the *One*, and some determinate Modes and Rules necessary to the *Other*.

Now, without saying one Word to shew, what our Moderate Men ought to adhere to, they certainly ought to adhere to *somewhat*: The Differences between *Us* and the *Dissenters* are so great, as at least to make them set up a *separate Ministry*, repair to *separate Places of Worship*, and perform divine *Service* in a different Manner: *He*, that ever joins with 'em, must therefore approve of their doing these things; nay, as often as he joins with 'em, he actually does the same things, he submits to a *separate Ministry*, &c. Now what Opinion can any *Dissenter*, who thinks at all, form of those Members of the *Church*, who approve of their *Dissent*, and yet do not *dissent* also? Or, who disapprove of the *Church*, and yet *Conform* to it? *He* must needs look upon 'em to be *Insincere*, guilty of *Dissimulation* with the *One* or the *Other*, and to be either *Church-Men*, or *Dissenters* in their Hearts, or neither of 'em, for Both they cannot be; they cannot think the Terms of *Communion* in the *Church* to be lawful, and yet such, as the *Dissenters*, at least as themselves ought not *Constantly* to adhere to.

From such Men's Conversation 'tis indeed easy enough to discover, which of the Two they have most at Heart, the *Church* or the *Separation*; because they are generally found to vindicate the *Dissenters*, from the Charge of *Schism*, with

with more Zeal and Earnestness, than they defend the *Church* and its Constitution ; But from their other Practices this cannot be discover'd ; And the *Honest Dissenter*, tho' he believes 'em to be more Friends to *him*, than they are to the *Church*, yet does not look upon 'em as trusty, and faithful Friends to either, because, if they have the same Thoughts of Separation, which he has, he thinks they ought to be *not only almost, but altogether Such, as He is.*

But because some may imagine, that the *Toleration of Dissenters* exempts not only them, but all those too, who at any Time join with them, from the Imputation of *Schism*, i. e. from any Violation of the *Unity*, any Offence against the Constitution and Establishment of the *Church*, I shall not here undertake to prove, that the Case of *Schism* is the very same, as it was before such *Toleration* was granted, but shall refer them to an excellent Treatise written some Years ago, and entitl'd, *The Charge of Schism continu'd, &c.* by which, if they understand common Sense, and clear Reasoning, they will perceive themselves to be mistaken in this Point, and that the *Dissenters* are just as much guilty of *Schism* now, as they were, before such *Toleration* was granted : For, if they were guilty of *Schism*, before there were any *Penal Laws* against it : The Abrogating of those Laws, or taking away the Penalties of them, leaves the Men, they were enacted against, but where they were before. Or if they were guilty of *Schism*, during the Time, the *Penal Laws* were in Force, they must be so, when

when such Laws are taken away; Otherwise *Schism* would consist in doing a thing, which incurs a Penalty; so that there could be no *Schism*, when the *Apostle* complain'd of it, because there were no Human Laws in force against it, which inflicted Penalties upon those, who should be guilty of it; Nor can there be any *Schism* now a Days, if, according to the celebrated Notion of our *Dissenters*, *Schism* consists in Uncharitable-ness; because there is no *Penal Law* against it. Much less can the *Church* it self be guilty of *Schism*, as some have most ridiculously pretend-ed, till there be some *Penal Law* enacted against the *Establish'd Church*. Let me observe, (and, I hope, if the Reasoning be just, no one will find fault with the Comparison,) that Fornica-tion is equally a Sin in those Countries, where there are *Licens'd Harlots*, as in any other; and equally in those Persons, who are so *Licens'd*, as in those, who commit it without a Dispen-sation.

IX.

Tho' he has Objections against the Church, which oblige him constantly to absent himself from its Communion and Worship, yet the Honest Dissenter, unless he can be thoroughly persuad-ed, that One of the Congregations Separating from the Church has a Minister duly Authoriz'd to Officiate in Holy Things, will not join with any One of 'em; but, 'till he can be satisfy'd of this, will absent himself from 'em all.

And this, I expect, will appear somewhat harsh and surprizing to *Party-Zealots*, *Ring-leaders*

leaders of *Sects* and *Factions*, if not to some tolerably well-meaning Men amongst Us ; For tho' they make the Places and Modes of publick Worship, to be Matters of no Importance, yet the Necessity of publick Worship is, what they cannot but contend for ; (tho', by the by, upon *this* very much depends the Necessity of stated Modes and Places;) so that with or without a *Ministry*, duly commission'd to teach and administer *Sacraments*, they think the Congregation ought to assemble, and that any Man's private Personal Qualifications give him a Commission to perform the *Office* of a *Minister* amongst 'em.

But, as 'tis not my Busines here to prove the Lawfulness, or Usurpation of any *Ministry* amongst us, I shall only affirm, what I imagine no Man can well deny, that an *Honest* Man will not join himself to any Assembly, the *Pastor* of which has no Commission to be so ; so that from hence all that will follow is, that every *Dissenter* ought to make this Enquiry, to be satisfy'd, whether the Minister of his Congregation be duly Authoriz'd, and to withdraw himself from such, as he finds to be otherwise. The Reason of which is clear and uncontestable ; For no Man has Liberty to *bear*, or to receive *Sacra-ments* at the Hands of One, who has no Power to *teach*, or to *administer* them ; Such an One can be esteem'd no other, than a *false Prophet*, an Uncommission'd, and usurping *Teacher* ; by submitting to whom, (especially where there is a sufficient Number of other legally-appointed *Mini-*

Ministers,) every Man becomes a Partaker, an Accomplice, or at least an Abettor of the Imposture.

Whether a Divine Mission be necessary to authorize any Person, to become a Minister in *Christ's Church*, is what I shall make no Question of: Nor can it be expected, that the clearest Proof of the Divine Institution of the *Christian Ministry*, should avail any thing with *Atheists* and *Enthusiasts*, who are the only Men, who oppose it: But if the *Apostle's Question*, (*How shall they Preach, except they be sent?*) should be answer'd after the assuming and arrogant manner of some Men, (*as well, as if they were sent,*) He has farther, and in a more positive way condemn'd such Usurpation, when he tells the *Hebrews*, that *No Man taketh this Honour unto himself, but he that is call'd of God, as was Aaron.*

I shall conclude this Point with some few Queries, which, I think every Man ought to answer to himself, before he can safely, and conscientiously join with any Congregation in the Publick Service of *God*.

First, Is not Christ the Supreme King, Priest, and Prophet of that Society, which is call'd his Church?

Secondly, Does not every Person ministering in the several Offices appointed by Him in that Society, minister in Subordination to Him, as His Substitute, and in His Name?

Thirdly, Ought not he, who performs this, to be Commission'd by the Supreme Head and Governor to do so?

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Are not all those, who join with one not so commission'd, in some Measure guilty of the same Usurpation, tho' not in so great a Degree, as he is, who acts in these Cases without such a Commission ?

Fifthly, Is not Acting in the Name of the Supreme Power of any Society, without being authoriz'd so to do, an Affront and an Abomination, rather than a Service and Obedience to the Supreme Power thereof?

Lastly, Is not private Worship alone more acceptable to God, than publick Worship perform'd by those, who in the very Act of it are guilty of an Affront, and an Abomination?

All which Queries being put, and answer'd in the Affirmative, as I judge they must be, the *Honest Dissenter*, if not satisfy'd, as to the due Commission of any one Ministry, (for that I do not here undertake to determine) will rather depend upon private Worship, than join with any publick Congregation. And he will be the more inclin'd to do so, when he considers, that the *Apostle* has stil'd those, to whom the *Word of Reconciliation is committed, Ambassadors for Christ*, who in Christ's stead pray the People to be reconcil'd to God. The Preaching of such he looks upon as an Embassy from Christ; And as he thinks it no small Piece of Presumption for a Man to deliver an Embassy, which he was not sent to do; so likewise he knows not how to excuse receiving such as the Ministers, the Messengers, or *Ambassadors of Christ*.

The Honest Dissenter is contented to have his own Liberty, and willing to allow every one the same; Therefore he does not endeavour to prejudice others against the Church, who of themselves have nothing at all to object against it; He does not think himself bound to infuse his own Scruples into them, and to make as many Profelytes to Separation, as he can.

I have indeed already suppos'd the *Honest Dissenter* to think himself in the Right, and as a Consequence of this, it may be urg'd, that he ought to perswade others to be of his own Opinion. This would be true, were the main and fundamental Points of *Christianity* the Matters in Dispute between us, did we reject any necessary, or impose any unnecessary *Articles of Faith* upon our own Members: But our Differences arising only about Points of *Discipline* and *Worship*, (for as to *Episcopal Ordination*, I look upon the *Dissenters* opposing That to be the Consequence, rather than the Cause of their *Separation*) the Man, who objects against the *Church*, must yet allow, that he, who has no Objection against it, may safely Conform, and is so far a true Member of *Christ's Church*, as to be in a Way of *Salvation*. Scruples and Obje&tions then being, what makes the *Dissenters* desire *Liberty of Conscience*, i e. that they may *separate* with Impunity, here's no manner of Obligation upon them to concern themselves with other Men's Consciences, but to let them have the same *Liberty* with themselves,

selves, i. e. to Worship God in such a manner, as they think is best: And the Charity, upon which they excuse their *Separation*, bids 'em let all those alone, who are going on in a safe Way; in a Way, wherein they shall be Sav'd. A *Dissenter* may indeed wish, that those things in the *Church*, which offend him, were remov'd, in order to effect that *Unity*, which I have before shew'd every *Honest Man* to be desirous of; but he need not wish or desire, that other Men should be offended at the things, which at present they approve of; that in order to agree with him, they should conceive a Disgust at, what they like, or should reject, what they can and do readily comply with.

As to the *Dissenters* having Liberty to Instruct their own Children, and Educate 'em in their own Way, I cannot apprehend, that they have any Claim to the doing this in a Publick manner, in *Schools*, *Nurseries*, and *Academies*; (tho', by the by, the *Episcopal Party* in *Scotland* are under more severe Prohibitions of this Kind, than the *Dissenters* in *England*;) yet the private Methods of doing this are still in their own Power, and within their Reach: But were it not at all prohibited thus to Educate their Youth, and had they the utmost Liberty, they could desire in this Case, I do not see, what Obligations they would have to make Use of it. For *Liberty of Conscience* supposes some unavoidable, unanswerable Scruples, for which Men therefore desire to be indulg'd with *Liberty*; and this is all, that the *Dissenters* them-

themselves not long ago desir'd, tho' they have made very considerable Improvements upon the *Indulgence* charitably granted them. Now can those Scruples be unavoidable, which are industriously infus'd? Or can those be unanswerable, which Men are taught to make, and adhere to? which they are purposely instructed in, and inform'd how to plead, and contend for? Or can that be call'd a Tenderness of Conscience, which deserves Liberty and Indulgence, when Prejudices have from their Infancy been with Care and Pains instill'd into Persons, without which 'tis highly probable, that some, if not all of 'em, would have been very well satisfy'd with the *Church*, would have had nothing to object against it, but contentedly have *conform'd* with as tender a Conscience, as now they *separate*? The Truth of the matter is, the *Honest Dissenter* desires no more than his own *Liberty*: He is as well pleas'd to see Men go to a *Church*, as to a *Conventicle*, so long as he believes, that they have nothing to object against that, which they *Conform* to; and, unless he be purposely consulted and apply'd to upon the very Points, he really thinks, that, which appears to him to be a sufficient Objection against the *Church*, appears quite otherwise to those, who *Conform* to it, and is willing, that it should do so, tho' the Consequence were, that there should be no *Dissenter* in the next Generation.

But especially the *Honest Dissenter* is unwilling to follow the general Practice of his own Party,

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Party, in an early Instruction of those, who are Educated for Teachers amongst them, and in training them up in a Method, an Art, or I may say, a *Knack* of Praying *Extempore*. Since he has so great an Opinion of *Spiritual Prayer*, and the lively Devotion it raises ; he accounts it to be a mere Cheat and Imposture, when Children have been *Disciplin'd* and Taught in a Method of Prayer, (as in their *Academies* is the constant Practice,) from *Fourteen* or *Fifteen* Years of Age, to the Time, they are admitted to exercise publick Prayer and Preaching ; after all this, I say, to pretend that such Prayers, (which indeed are scarce so much as *Extempore*,) are *Spiritual*, Matter and Words suggested by the *Spirit*, is an Inconsistency, which he cannot reconcile with the Principles of *Honesty* ; And therefore, as he knows, that such Prayer, as this, whatever it seems to, or whatever Influence it has upon the Hearers, is to the Man, who Prays, as much an Exercise of the *Art*, he has learn'd, as *Sleight of Hand* to a *German Artist*, he scorns to put upon a Congregation of poor, illiterate People, with a vain Notion, that the *Holy Man* utters those Divine, those ravishing Prayers by the immediate, and extraordinary Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*.

XI.

Because the Conscience of the Honest Dissenter is tender, as appears by his Scruples, and Objections against the Church, which he cannot answer, and his Non-conformity upon their Account; therefore

fore he is unexceptionable in his Life and Conversation; He allows himself in the Habitual Practice of no Sin, because his Conscience is equally tender with Respect to Vice, as 'tis with Respect to Opinion.

A tender Conscience is unquestionably the best Kind of Conscience in the World; 'tis that, which prevents a Man's doing any thing, which he is not firmly perswaded is Lawful; and upon this Foundation it is, that the *Honest Dissenter* builds his *Separation*, viz. Because he believes, Conformity with the *Church* would in him be a Sin. If his Conscience then be really thus tender, whatever Temptation comes upon him, whether Honour invites, Interest persuades, or Pleasure allures him to comply, his Conscience, being sensible of the least Prick or Touch from any thing Unlawful, immediately forbids his Compliance: But in a more particular manner, he will not allow any Sin to become habitual to him, because that would *fear* and harden his Conscience, or *wound* it deeper, than he could bear.

Without Reflecting upon any particular Person, whoever is guilty of frequent and repeated Acts of any Vice, (whether it be Drunkenness, or Debauchery, Lying, Cozening, or Defaming his Neighbours; whether it be Covetousness, or Uncharitableness, or in short any other wicked Practice) had much better plead, that he has no Conscience, than, that he has One, which is peculiarly tender. If such an One should say, that he cannot Conform to the *Church*,

Church, because his Conscience is tender, and pricks him upon the least Motion made towards such *Conformity*, 'tis impossible surely, that any Man should believe him, but, who thinks the foregoing Vices to be no Sins, or that *Conformity with the Church* is a far greater One : Besides, the things in themselves are inconsistent ; for a tender Conscience is afraid of being touch'd by any thing, that will prick, bruise or corrode it ; All things unlawful are of this Kind ; so that you will always find the strictest Piety, and Integrity in a *Dissenter*, or the utmost Hypocrify ; Conscience has nothing to do with his *Separation*, or it will have to do with his whole Life and Conversation.

And here I declare again, that I condemn no Man : But, if a *Dissenter* upon the Examination of himself should discover, that 'tis a vain Pretence, he has all along been making Use of, and that he has really no Plea to the Indulgence granted to Men of tender Consciences, 'tis high Time for him to look about him, upon more Accounts than One ; He must then begin, by a proper Compunction, to work up his Conscience to such a *true* Tenderness, as will make him Correct his Life, and his Principles together ; and persuade him, either not to *Separate* any longer, or to do it upon better Grounds, than he did before.

XII.

The Honest Dissenter is entirely and perfectly in Charity with all other Christians; and therefore,

fore, however they differ from him, he is willing to believe, that they do so upon Principles of the same Honesty with himself.

I cannot indeed here agree with those Men, who make Uncharitableness the only thing, that fixes the Guilt of Schism upon a Separatist, and, that upon whatever other Accounts a Man Separates from the Establish'd Church, he is not guilty of Schism. For we find those charg'd by the Apostle with this Crime, who were ignorantly and insensibly toss'd to and fro, thro' their own Weakness, like Children, or by the prevailing Treachery of others, with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive. So that they, who suffer themselves to be impos'd on by cunning and designing Men, to be seduc'd, and led away by them, tho' they themselves have no more ill Design, or Uncharitableness in them, than Children, are not excusable, tho' undoubtedly much more so, than their Leaders; and than they would be, if Uncharitableness were added to their Separation.

But, what I here contend for, is, that the Dissenter, who is Honest upon all the foregoing Accounts, must be so upon this likewise, viz. That he is in Charity with all other Christians; 'Tis not his Charity alone, that makes him Honest; but, if he be Honest, amongst other things he is sure to maintain his Charity; so that, tho' he had much rather the Constitution of the Church were alter'd to his own Mind, yet he verily believes, that 'twas at the first establish'd upon

upon truly **Christian** Principles, and that it is now preserv'd upon the same; i.e. that they, who set it, and they, who maintain it upon the foot, it now stands, neither had, nor have any other Reason for so doing, but the Necessity, or Expediency of things, and not to impose upon, and exercise a Tyrannical Dominion over the Consciences of **Christians**.

Thus likewise, whenever any thing is enacted for the Additional Security of the *Church*, as by Law establish'd, the *Honest Dissenter* being not abridg'd in his *Liberty*, but mov'd by the *Charity*, he is possess'd of, tho' he never so much dislikes the thing, ascribes the doing of it to the Perswasion of Men's Consciences; He does not immediately upon such Occasions, cry out, *Tyranny!* *Oppression!* and *Persecution!* For these are wicked Works, which he is not willing upon a bare Surmise only to charge any Man with, much less a whole Body and Society of **Christians**; But he believes, that they, who set this new *Guard* and *Fence* about the *Church*, thought themselves indispensably oblig'd to do so, as much as he thinks himself bound to *separate* from that, which they thereby establish, secure and maintain.

And as the *Honest Dissenter* expresses his *Charity* in these Particulars; so does he farther in rejecting those Objections against the *Church*, which are equally ridiculous and uncharitable; the most remarkable One of which is the Charge of *Papery*, in those things particularly, wherein the *Church* has in a publick Manner declar'd her Intention to be quite contrary to, what Her Enemies would fix upon her. Thus to tell us, that we use the

Cross in Baptism Popisbly, by way of Exorcism,
or Kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,
by way of Adoration, (whereas no Man can more
clearly explain himself, than the Church has done
in these Particulars.) This, I say, is such an
uncharitable Censure, that you will never hear
the Honest Dissenter talk after this manner. Nor
does he complain, that we Pray in our Litany for
Pirates, and High-way-Men amongst all those, that
travel by Land, or by Water ; for Whores amongst
those, that are labouring with Child, &c. Because,
as he has Charity for Us, he does not think, that
we Pray for these exactly in the same Manner,
and with Regard to the same things, as for the
Good and Honest Part of Mankind ; neither, as
he has Charity for Them too, does he imagine,
that they ought not to be Pray'd for at all : But,
when he thinks, that these wicked People are in-
cluded in those general Expressions, he takes it
for granted, that we Pray for them Charitably,
as we ought to do ; for God's common Mercies,
which he pours down upon the Just, and the Un-
just, and for his peculiar Favour, that such Sinners
may see their Errors, may be Converted, and Live.

I might produce many more Instances, in which the *Honest Dissenter* expresses his Charity; especially in not condemning the *Church*, for that remarkably Charitable thing in her *Liturgy* (and that which most expresses Her Tenderness, next to Her Indulgence of tender Consciences) the *Hope*, she declares, she has of every Person's Salvation in the *Burial-Office*. For indeed the very least Degree of *Hope*, even that, which is next to *Despair*, will suffice to warrant this Expression;

and

and I'm sure, we can have no Certainty of any Man's Damnation, which will justify our Pronouncing it, - which we must in Effect do, did we use this Expression for One, and not for Another. But, I shall conclude with this One Remark, That, tho' I allow not Charity alone to be sufficient to excuse Separation, yet without this Nothing will excuse it; and tho' a Man Speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, tho' he has the Gift of Prophecy, and understands all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' the being never so much Wiser, and Better-gifted, than other Men, or to join with those, that are so, induce him to Separate from the Church, yet, if he has not Charity, he is become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.

And now I shall add but one Word, or two more; The Honest Dissenter may perhaps Read this, as well as some other Treatises of the like Nature, tho' he is before-hand inform'd, that they are wrote against many of his Party; He will judge of 'em, as he finds 'em, notwithstanding all that others can say to him; And, if upon Examination he finds, that he cannot Separate any longer, and be Honest, he will prefer the Latter; will rather renounce his Schism, his Party, his Interest, and every thing, than, What is dearest to him, his Conscience, and his Salvation.

F I N I S.

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